

# IDAHO EDUCATION NETWORK:



by **GARRY LOUGH**  
Communications Director,  
Idaho Education Network

## CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & CONNECTING SCHOOLS

**W**hile much of the 2009 legislative session focused on budgets and the economic outlook, the Idaho Legislature passed a landmark piece of legislation that gained little attention but is critical to raising student achievement in Idaho. With the support of Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter and State Superintendent Tom Luna, the Legislature invested \$3 million in federal stimulus funding to develop and implement the Idaho Education Network.

The Idaho Education Network will bring broadband internet connectivity to every community in the state and develop a statewide network to bridge every school no matter the geographic location. Idaho will finally bridge the digital divide between rural and urban schools.

Right now, many of Idaho's rural schools lack the access to advanced opportunities, such as dual credit. Students cannot take field trips to the State Capitol or the zoo, and Idaho teachers in rural areas cannot access professional development

opportunities without traveling miles and miles away from home.

The Idaho Education Network will change all that. Within three years, every Idaho high school will have the broadband internet connectivity and equipment necessary to create a virtual classroom where students can take advanced courses, dual credit classes and go on virtual field trips. Teachers and administrators in rural communities will also have the chance to access professional development without traveling. The possibilities for this network are endless.

Similar networks have already been developed in other states. Idaho students must have the same opportunities. In Utah, for example, it is not uncommon for students in large and small communities alike to earn an associate's degree before graduating from high school. Why? Because students in every high school -- small and large, rural and urban -- have access to dual credit courses through the Utah Education Network.

Idaho will begin developing the

Idaho Education Network this year, through a joint effort among the Idaho Department of Administration, State Department of Education, Idaho public schools, institutions of higher education, and the business community. The state will use the initial \$3 million in funding to secure an additional **\$6 million** in federal e-Rate matching funds to fully fund the project.

Over the next year, an estimated 40 percent of Idaho high schools will be connected to the network, and every high school will be connected by **2011**.

In just three years, high school students in the most rural and remote Idaho communities will be able to take a tour of Washington, D.C. or earn college credits -- all from the same classroom they are sitting in today.

The Idaho Education Network will not only give Idaho students access to new opportunities, but it will also instill 21st century learning skills. We live in a global economy that relies on technology for everything from business transactions to

communicating with friends. To ensure Idaho students succeed in life after high school, we must make sure they have the technology skills necessary to live and work in the 21st century.

Many students are already comfortable with technology and use it to shop, communicate and do homework. Therefore, the virtual learning environment will not be new to most Idaho students. But through the network, these students can also learn new skills, such as video streaming, teleconferencing, multimedia, and virtual instruction, that will be invaluable in the 21st century.

The Idaho Education Network will also benefit the local community. Firefighters, emergency response

personnel, police officers, nurses, educators, entrepreneurs, and others in rural communities will now have access to the same broadband internet connectivity as schools. A small business owner, for example, can improve his operations by exploring course offerings at an Idaho college or university. Additionally, emergency personnel can hone their skills through online training opportunities.

During pilot projects in the Weiser and Emmett school districts earlier this year, firefighters and peace officers in

those communities also had access to more than 650 hours of professional development because of this new network.

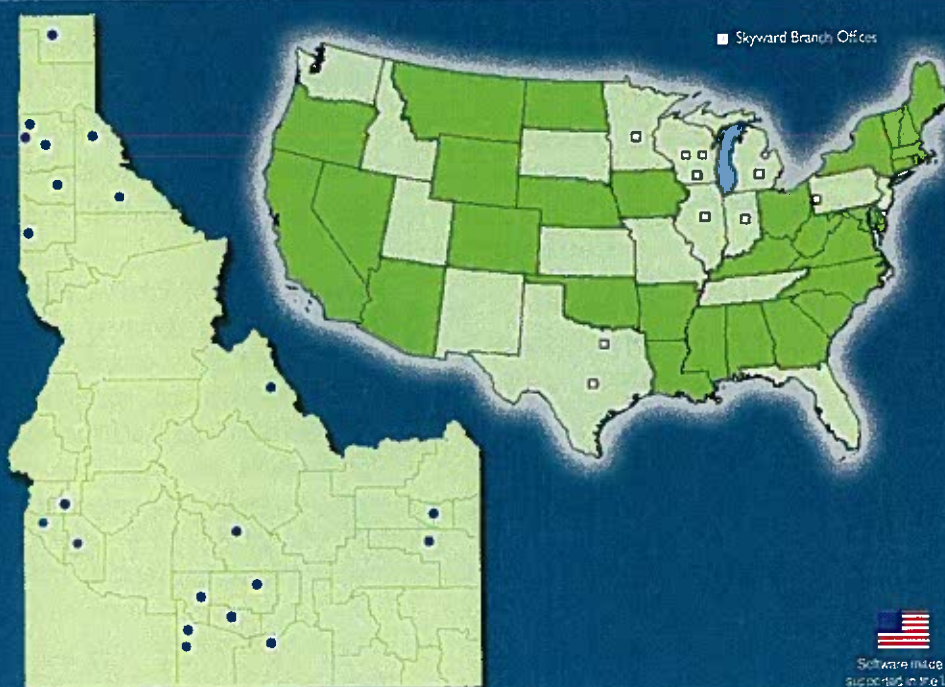
With all these benefits and more, the Idaho Education Network will become the premier statewide network for delivering educational opportunities to local communities.



To learn more about the Idaho Education Network, please visit [www.ien.idaho.gov](http://www.ien.idaho.gov). We would be happy to share more information with you, your school, and your community.

# 21 Idaho districts

have joined over 1,300 districts across the world using Skyward's administrative software.



"I cannot state strongly enough how invaluable the support of Skyward personnel has been. There has never been an instance when personnel has not been there to help in a friendly and knowledgeable manner. I would recommend this program to school districts looking for a change wholeheartedly."

Terry Rinaldi, Business Manager  
Kellogg Joint District 391, ID

**Learn more  
about Skyward**

email: [info@skyward.com](mailto:info@skyward.com)  
call: 1.800.236.7274



Powerful Student, Finance and Human Resources  
Administrative software exclusively for K-12  
schools - public and private.